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HUMAN RIGHTS QUESTIONS

Situation and developments regarding the logistical and human rights resources support for the activities of the Centre for Human Rights in the field of human rights

Report of the Secretary-General

SUMMARY

In paragraph 15 of its resolution 1990/25 the Commission on Human Rights requested the Secretary-General to submit to the Economic and Social Council at its first regular session of 1990 a report on the situation regarding the logistical and human resource support for the increasing activities of the Centre for Human Rights - in particular, the servicing of the human rights treaty bodies, the provisions for other servicing included in the United Nations budget and the implementation of those provisions.

* E/1990/30.

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INTRODUCTION

1. The Centre for Human Rights 1/ is organized into six main sections: international instruments; communications; special procedures; research, studies and prevention of discrimination; advisory services and technical assistance; and external relations, documentation and publications. Activities carried out in each section are discussed in chapter I below. Chapter II describes in detail how the Centre's work-load has increased in recent years and documents how resources have failed to keep pace with the increase in responsibilities. The final chapter draws several conclusions and proposes certain ways in which the Centre might be enabled to work more efficiently and effectively.

2. The work of the Centre has been, throughout the decade, enhanced by the exercise of the good offices of the Secretary-General, which has developed into a significant and discreet method for dealing with human rights problems.

I. PROGRAMME OF ACTIVITIES SINCE 1980

A. International instruments

3. Currently, the International Instruments Section of the Centre is responsible for providing both substantive and technical support to five human rights treaty bodies - namely, the Human Rights Committee; the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights; the Committee on Elimination of Racial Discrimination; the Group of Three on Apartheid; and the Committee against Torture - in respect of their supervisory and monitoring functions relating to the implementation of the various human rights treaties. Such functions are discharged by the treaty bodies, primarily through the consideration of State Party reports which lie at the heart of the international system for the promotion and protection of human rights.

4. The international instruments under which these bodies were established are the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights; International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights; International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination; International Convention on the Repression and Punishment of the Crime of Apartheid; and the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment.

1. Servicing needs and work-load

5. Heavy demands have been placed on the Section in recent years as a result of a constantly growing work-load. The growth has resulted primarily from the quantitative and qualitative factors described below.

6. Until about three years ago only three of the five treaty bodies now being serviced by the Section were in existence - the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the Committee against Torture having commenced their operations only in 1987 2/ and 1988, respectively. As a result of activities of the additional bodies and the increased pace of operations of the previously existing

bodies over the past decade, the Section has had to cope with roughly a doubling of the volume of documentation since 1980. The number of States Parties to the various treaties has also doubled in the past decade, with a consequent increase in reports to be processed and meetings serviced.

7. The number of treaty bodies may soon increase from five to seven when the Convention on the Rights of the Child receives the required ratifications and the Convention on the Rights of Migrant Workers and their Families enters into force. This of course will entail a further major increase in the Section's work-load.

8. During the current year the Section will be required to service some 18 meetings, amounting to a total of more than 32 weeks of in-session servicing. The meetings include 3 three-week annual sessions of the Human Rights Committee, preceded in each case by a one-week session of the working group established under article 40 of the Covenant; 2 three-week sessions of the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, preceded by a one-week session of its working group; 2 three-week sessions of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination; 2 two-week sessions of the Committee against Torture; one week-long session of the Group of Three on Apartheid; two meetings of States Parties to human rights instruments; a meeting of the persons chairing the human rights treaty bodies; and a meeting of the Task Force on Computerization of the work of the treaty bodies. (See para. 56.)

9. The documentation work-load is commensurably heavy (see para. 55). Besides receiving and processing reports of States Parties, the Section drafts, in connection with the meetings of the five treaty bodies, a significant number of reports, notes and studies for submission by the Secretary-General to the Commission on Human Rights, the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly. It also generates official documentation with States Parties, committee experts, specialized agencies, non-governmental organizations, academic institutions and private researchers.

10. The impact on the Section's work-load stemming from the qualitative changes that have occurred in the approaches and methods of the treaty bodies, particularly in recent years, has been very substantial. As the transition was made from the consideration of initial reports to periodic reports, the committees became more specific and more sophisticated in their requests for detailed information, and the Section's task of servicing them became much more complex. Thus, for example, the staff of the Section have been required to assume such additional tasks as the preparation, in advance of the consideration by the treaty bodies of a State Party's periodic report, of analytical studies relating to the human rights situation in that State Party; formulating extensive "lists of issues" for transmission to States Parties in advance of their appearance before the committees; and providing research and drafting assistance to the committees in the elaboration of general comments.

11. The analytical studies are based on an in-depth review by the staff of a State Party's previous submissions, the summary records relating to the consideration by a treaty body of such previous reports and the new report that is to be considered, together with the texts of new legislation or constitutional amendments, as

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applicable. They reflect both the past and current status of the implementation by States Parties of their obligations under the various international human rights instruments and highlight the main remaining problem areas. The treaty bodies regard such studies as indispensable in facilitating the effective discharge of their monitoring repsonsibilities. The lists of issues drafted by the staff and, after approval, submitted to States Parties which are about to present a periodic report for consideration by a treaty body consist of a series of often quite specific questions under each of the main articles of the relevant treaty and serve as the main framework for the treaty body's examination of the report. They are based on a painstaking and critical reading of each State Party submission concerning laws and practices relating to each of the provisions of a given human rights instrument. The staff's role in the formulation by the treaty bodies of general comments relating to problems of policy, implementation and interpretation in respect of various treaty provisions involves drafting or revising provisions that are frequently highly technical or of considerable legal complexity and preparing new negotiating texts reflecting the discussions on the draft general comments that have been made during the plenary sessions of the treaty bodies. The staff are also required to assist individual members charged with the initial elaboration of a general comment by undertaking research into the travaux préparatoires relating to the various treaties.

12. It is important to note that the Section's staff are wholly responsible for carrying out all the substantive work - analytical, legal or research - associated with such tasks. The drafting of the sections of the Committee's annual reports relating to the consideration of the periodic reports of States Parties has become more difficult and time-consuming owing to the greater depth and complexity of the legal issues being covered. The staff are also required to devote a significant amount of time to responding to State Party inquiries and requests for extensive briefings concerning such matters as reporting requirements under the various instruments, preparation of reports, and procedures and practices of the treaty bodies relating to the discharge of their monitoring functions.

B. Communications

13. The Communications Section of the Centre is responsible for handling communications (complaints, appeals, petitions) under various existing confidential procedures. This applies both to procedures governed by resolutions - in particular, the procedure governed by Economic and Social Council resolution 1503 (XLVIII) - and procedures governed by international treaties - in particular, that governed by the Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. During the past decade the work-load of the Section has increased dramatically. The paragraphs below describe its activities.

1. 1503 procedure

14. In resolution 1503 (XLVIII) of 27 May 1970 the Council lays down a procedure for the examination of gross violations of human rights. Four United Nations bodies (meeting for 13 weeks per year) are involved in the implementation of the procedure:

(a) The Working Group on Communications of the Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities;

(b) The Sub-Commission itself;

(c) The Working Group on Situations of the Commission on Human Rights;

(d) The Commission itself.

Issues concerning admissibility are dealt with by the first two bodies, while examination of the merits takes place at the level of the Working Group on Situations and the Commission. Representatives of the Governments concerned attend the closed meetings at the Commission level. Confidential dossiers concerning 44 countries have reached the Commission under the 1503 procedure.

15. Ten years ago, fewer than 30,000 communications were processed annually under the 1503 procedure. In 1989, over 300,000 communications were received for processing.

16. At the beginning of the decade the Communications Section was staffed by seven Professional officers and seven General Service staff, all against established posts. In 1990, the Section is staffed by six Professional officers and two General Service staff, on established posts, plus four General Service staff on temporary assistance.

2. Optional Protocol

17. The Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (operating since 1977) lays down the first international procedure for an in-depth examination of individual complaints. Two bodies are involved in the implementation of the procedure, the Human Rights Committee and its Working Group on Communications. The two bodies hold three sessions per year of 12 weeks' duration altogether. Issues concerning admissibility are examined by the Working Group, while examination of the merits takes place at the level of the Committee.

18. At the outset, and at the beginning of the past decade, relatively few States (23) had become Parties to the Optional Protocol. In the past few years, however, as the number of States Parties grew (49 at the beginning of 1990) and a larger public became aware of the procedure (particularly lawyers) the number of cases placed before the Committee and the Working Group increased markedly. At the beginning of 1990, over 140 cases were waiting for consideration, compared with 29 at the end of 1980. In order to cope with the growing work-load, the Committee has recently appointed a special rapporteur to deal with new cases between sessions.

3. Other work

19. The Communications Section is also assigned the implementation of two new mandates: the handling of communications under the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (in force since 1988), and the handling of communications under the procedure governed by article 14 of

the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (operative since 1984). In addition, the Section handles communications regarding infringements of trade union rights governed by Economic and Social Council resolution 277 (X) of 17 February 1950.

C. Special procedures

20. During the past decade an accentuated trend towards more fact-finding and direct contacts has taken place. Human rights policy-making organs have created an increasing number of extra-conventional procedures and mechanisms (the so-called "special procedures") to deal with cases of alleged human rights violations and to investigate and carry out fact-finding into such situations, using either an issue-oriented or a country-oriented approach. Although only four such procedures had to be serviced in 1980 by the (then) Division of Human Rights, during the most recent biennium 13 procedures and mechanisms - eight on situations involving specific countries or territories, and five on thematic issues - were implemented. Under the mandates serviced by the Centre for Human Rights in 1988/1989, 22 field missions were carried out and 39 substantive reports (containing some 2,500 pages) were submitted to the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and the Commission on Human Rights. In addition, the Secretary-General was requested to report to those organs on eight related questions, which involved the preparation of 24 reports. These figures do not include transcripts of testimonies, press summaries, summaries of allegations and complaints received, or analytical and other working papers placed before the relevant committees, groups and special rapporteurs.

21. Visits *in situ* and the drafting of reports entail labour-intensive preparatory work and in-depth analyses of country situations, including reviews of legislation and judicial practice. The information received from Governments, non-governmental organizations and individuals on both country situations and phenomena is constantly increasing, and the number of individual cases processed - in particular, under the urgent-action procedure applied in the framework of the mandates on disappearances, summary executions and torture - has more than doubled during the past biennium. As the procedures become better known, more persons turn to the Centre for assistance. In order to provide the working groups and special rapporteurs with a reliable analysis of the ever-increasing information received, experience and specialization is required.

22. Meanwhile Governments have stepped up their co-operation in respect of these procedures and mechanisms, and in the dialogue with special rapporteurs and working groups, they expect their questions to be answered promptly by the Centre and their requests for information to be met with the necessary degree of precision in the reports to the General Assembly and/or the Commission on Human Rights.

23. This development has led to a constant refinement in the methods of work applied under the various procedures and mechanisms. The most elaborate approach is the one adopted by the Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances, which follows each disappearance from the initial report stage to an eventual clarification. This involves sifting through thousands of communications, many of

which need to be updated because the initial report lacks certain required information, entering the communications into the computer, cross-checking data, carrying on detailed correspondence with Governments and sources, and preparing documentation for the three annual working sessions of the Group. At present, the Group is dealing with some 18,000 individual cases.

D. Prevention of discrimination and protection of minorities and vulnerable groups

24. The work in this area of activity entails the substantive servicing of the Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities and its working groups, the substantive servicing of other bodies regarding relevant items on their agendas (General Assembly, Economic and Social Council, the Commission on Human Rights), the servicing of ad hoc meetings (for example, the Global Consultation on Racism and Racial Discrimination), the preparation of substantive reports for such bodies, and assisting special rapporteurs in the preparation of their reports.

25. Another key element of work in this area is the Second Decade to Combat Racism and Racial Discrimination, declared by the General Assembly for the period 1983-1993 and, in particular, implementation of the Decade's Programme of Action.

26. In the past decade three factors have marked the evolution of this subprogramme: a significant increase in the bodies set up by policy-making organs to deal with issues relating to the prevention of discrimination and protection of minorities and vulnerable groups; an extension of the subject-matter studied in this area of activity; and a great increase in the complexity of the subject-matter dealt with.

1. Activities in 1979-1980 and 1989-1990

27. In the two-year period 1979-1980, the activities of the Centre in this area comprised the servicing of the two sessions of the Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities (three weeks in 1979; four weeks in 1980); two sessions of the pre-sessional Working Group of the Sub-Commission on Slavery (three days in 1979; five days in 1980) and two sessional working groups of the Sub-Commission (1980 - minorities and ratifications of instruments). At its sessions in 1979 and 1980 the Sub-Commission agendas contained 12-13 substantive items or sub-items, and the Secretariat introduced 15-18 substantive reports for each session. The agendas focused on the prevention of discrimination and the promotion of civil and political rights and were beginning to confront more complex issues of economic, social and cultural rights and the interrelationship of all human rights.

28. For the two-year period 1989-1990, the picture is completely changed. The Sub-Commission now meets for four weeks each year, preceded by two pre-sessional working groups (Contemporary Forms of Slavery, one week; and Indigenous Populations, two weeks from 1990), and has two or three sessional working groups on such topics as violations of human rights, detention and the right to leave. The

Sub-Commission's agendas contain some 24 substantive items or sub-items, and the Secretariat produces or makes substantive contributions to over 40 documents. The complexity and breadth of the agenda items and of the subjects dealt with in the reports has increased to include such issues as extreme poverty and human rights, traditional practices affecting the health of women and children, child prostitution, exploitation of child labour, adoption of children for commercial purposes, discrimination against HIV-infected persons, disability and human rights, ways of bringing constructive solutions to situations involving minorities, and the achievements made and obstacles encountered in the United Nation's fight against racism. An important task of the Sub-Commission is to review the effect of outside assistance on the enjoyment of human rights in South Africa - especially the assistance of transnational corporations and banks - with a view to bringing such assistance to a halt.

29. It should be noted that the Sub-Commission has adopted a detailed programme of action for the prevention of the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography which could contribute to the protection of children from those practices.

30. During 1989-1990 the Centre began substantive servicing of the Board of Trustees of the Voluntary Fund for Victims of Torture (over 100 projects on file), and the Voluntary Fund for Indigenous Populations (over 400 requests a year for assistance).

2. Second Decade to Combat Racism and Racial Discrimination

31. The Programme of Action for the Second Decade to Combat Racism and Racial Discrimination for the years 1990-1993 was incorporated into the regular work programme of the Centre by the General Assembly in resolution 42/47. It was not accompanied by any increase in regular resources. It includes the steps listed below as well as those parts of the Programme for 1983-1989 which have not yet been implemented:

(a) Global study of the extent to which the children of migrant workers are enabled to receive education in their mother tongue;

(b) Meeting of experts to review the experience of countries in the operation of schemes of internal self-government for indigenous populations;

(c) Technical study on the impact of article 27 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights in providing guarantees of equality to persons belonging to minorities;

(d) Regional workshops on the adoption of legislation to combat racism and racial discrimination;

(e) Seminar on community relations commissions and their functions;

(f) Seminar to assess experience gained in the implementation of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination;

(g) International campaign to contribute to the early independence of Namibia, in conformity with Security Council resolution 435 (1978) of 29 September 1978;

(h) Round table of experts to discuss the preparation of teaching materials to combat racism and racial discrimination;

(i) Issuance in three additional languages of the handbook of recourse procedures available to victims of racism and racial discrimination;

(j) Two regional workshops on the adoption of legislation to combat racism and racial discrimination;

(k) International campaign on the main obstacles to the full eradication of racism, racial discrimination and apartheid, and on ways and means of bringing about the early disappearance of those scourges;

(l) Study on the treatment of political prisoners and detainees in South Africa and Namibia, particularly women and children;

(m) Global study on the extent of dissemination of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination.

E. Research, studies and standard-setting

32. The Research Section undertakes studies and carries out research on human rights issues for United Nations human rights organs, elaborates international human rights standards for adoption by those organs and reviews the implementation of certain standards. This work is closely related to the prevention of discrimination and protection of minorities and vulnerable groups. In the 10-year period 1979-1989, activities in the area of research, studies and standard-setting were marked by an increase in the number of bodies serviced, the number of subjects dealt with and the complexity of subjects studied.

1. Research and review of implementation of standards

33. In the area of research and review of the implementation of international standards, the Sub-Commission had in 1979-1980 seven studies under way by special rapporteurs: individual's duties to the community; independence of the judiciary; exploitation of child labour; new international economic order and human rights; human rights and states of emergency; detention on grounds of mental ill-health; and computerized personal files.

34. In the period 1989-1990 close to 20 studies were being conducted by special rapporteurs, with the help of the Secretariat, or by the Secretary-General himself. At the end of its 1989 session the Sub-Commission was able to list 16

studies conducted by special rapporteurs in addition to those prepared by the Secretary-General. The topics included the effective implementation of economic, social and cultural rights (including the impact of external debt on the enjoyment of human rights), human rights and the environment, toxic waste, chemical weapons, youth and human rights. Other topics, such as execution of persons below 18 years of age, the treatment of detained juveniles, compensation for victims of violations of human rights, administrative detention without charges or trial, the right to a fair trial, and the right to freedom of opinion and expression, are being looked at by the Sub-Commission. Further, thanks to the growing co-operation of Governments, the review of human rights and states of emergency has taken on a broader dimension and involves a significantly expanded work-load.

2. Standard-setting

35. In 1979-1980, the subprogramme on standard-setting supported the drafting by the Commission of the convention against torture (pre-sessional working group, two sessions, 1979, 1980), the draft declaration against religious intolerance (sessional working groups of the Commission, two sessions) and the draft convention on the rights of the child (two sessions). At the level of the General Assembly, it assisted in the drafting of the convention on the rights of migrant workers and their families (one sessional group, 1980).

36. In 1989-1990 pre-sessional groups completed work on the draft convention on the rights of the child (one session, December 1983, resumed in 1989) and made progress on the rights and responsibilities of those promoting human rights (two sessions); the protection of mentally ill persons (one session); and the human rights of migrant workers (four sessions: two in 1989, two in 1990). In addition, the following texts were dealt with in sessional working groups: draft declaration against disappearances; draft declaration on minorities; and draft declaration on indigenous rights. A draft declaration on the right to leave will be taken up by a sessional working group of the Sub-Commission in 1990.

3. Technical reviews of draft instruments

37. In response to a request by the General Assembly in its resolution 44/155 for consistent and high standards to be maintained in international instruments drafted by the United Nations, the Centre is carrying out technical reviews of draft international instruments. It reviewed the draft convention on the rights of the child and is now reviewing the draft migrant workers convention and the draft declaration on minorities. These technical reviews require considerable resources, especially when the texts are lengthy and complicated.

F. Advisory services and technical assistance

38. At the beginning of the 1980s, the activities carried out under the programme of advisory services comprised, on average, two seminars per year, 25 fellowships and the provision of the services of one expert (Equatorial Guinea). That pattern continued throughout most of the decade.

39. In 1987, the programme was given new impetus as part of a new overall strategy for protecting and promoting human rights. Additional resources became available under the United Nations Voluntary Fund for Advisory Services and Technical Assistance in the Field of Human Rights, established by the Secretary-General in November 1987 at the request of the Commission on Human Rights. The new approach is action-oriented, concrete and pragmatic and is based on the notion that the best bastion against violations is strong national infrastructures for the promotion and protection of human rights. The Centre's activities since 1988 have ranged from assisting in the setting up of human rights centres/offices to providing expert advice in formulating legislation in accordance with international human rights standards. It has been involved in training administrators of justice, providing other expert assistance on specific human rights questions, organizing human rights fellowships and internships, establishing law libraries and law faculties, translating into local languages and printing basic human rights instruments, and other ad hoc forms of technical support. The Centre's assistance, therefore, varies from country to country and can be tailor-made to fit the need.

40. The experience of the past two years confirms that arrangements for the training, inter alia, of national administrators of justice, officials in ministries of foreign affairs and justice, and law enforcement officials - particularly police officers, prison administrators, and military personnel - can make a valuable and catalytic contribution to fostering national consensus on human rights matters and strengthening national human rights infrastructures. Two key goals addressed in the training services are: thorough knowledge of the international human rights instruments entered into by member States and of their translation into domestic practice and action and the creation and/or maintenance of human rights machinery for the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms.

41. On the basis of such experience, it would appear that activities of the Centre have in some cases directly contributed to the formation and/or strengthening of national human rights commissions or offices. In others, they have facilitated the process of ratification of international human rights treaties - most notably the Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the Convention against Torture. In still other cases, they have enhanced the ability of States Parties to international instruments to adapt domestic legislation and practices to international human rights standards and have improved their reporting to the various treaty bodies, thereby enhancing the monitoring role and effectiveness of those bodies.

42. A fourfold increase in advisory services took place by 1988. In the biennium 1988-1989, for example, the programme included the following: some 20 seminars, workshops or training courses of a regional or national nature in Argentina, Ecuador, Gambia, Greece, Guatemala, Guinea, Italy, Peru, the Philippines, Portugal, Rwanda, Togo, Tunisia and the USSR, among other countries; some 100 fellowships; advisory missions to Equatorial Guinea, Guatemala and Haiti; the services of 17 experts to various developing countries; assistance to the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights of OAU; and country programmes in Colombia, Guatemala and Gambia. The pattern of activities for 1990 will be similar to the one for 1989. However, requests emanating from more than 45 countries for advisory services and technical assistance cannot be met because of lack of funds.

G. External relations, documentation and publications

43. Before 1987, activities in external relations, documentation and publications had low priority and were performed by staff from various sections and units of the Centre, with mixed results. In 1987, the Centre established a new section which consolidated activities carried out in the three areas and took charge of the new information and education tasks of the Centre, including (in 1988), the implementation of activities under the World Public Information Campaign for Human Rights. Those activities and tasks now have high priority at the Centre. Indeed, they constitute one of the main pillars of the entire human rights programme - the other two being standard-setting and implementation.

44. The Section provides overall guidance and co-ordination within the United Nations system on the implementation of the activities of the World Public Information Campaign for Human Rights and ensures the efficient and effective use of available resources as well as better accountability and quality of service. It also greatly increases the ability of the Centre to provoke awareness of fundamental rights and freedoms and create well-informed, realistic and constructive public opinion world-wide. These are essential elements in the long-term objective of universal enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms.

45. Within the framework of the fortieth anniversary year of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Centre began a new and expanded publications programme. New publications that have been issued since then - such as the Fact Sheet series, the Human Rights Newsletter, the Bulletin on Human Rights, the Study series - are intended to explain, in an informative and interesting format addressed to the public at large, essential questions concerning human rights and fundamental freedoms, the work of the United Nations and the international machinery available to promote and protect human rights. The publications programme also co-ordinates a number of other activities, including regional seminars and workshops; commemorative meetings; the award of human rights prizes; briefings; updating of various reference materials on human rights; and efforts within and outside the United Nations system to promote human rights in connection with the World Public Information Campaign.

46. The ultimate objective of the Campaign is the creation of a universal culture of human rights and the constructive engagement of the wider human rights community, made up of Governments, non-governmental organizations, academic and research institutions, the media and concerned individuals, for the achievement of that objective.

47. One responsibility of the Section relates to human rights teaching and education. Seminars and workshops have been organized, and publications issued. Additional activities are undertaken in close collaboration with UNESCO. Furthermore, the Section has strengthened its relations with non-governmental organizations, academic and research institutions, and the media and has, as mandated, established focal points for human rights world-wide.

II. CURRENT WORK-LOAD AND STAFF RESOURCES

48. As noted above, the work-load of the Centre for Human Rights has increased rapidly in recent years. The Section dealing with the implementation of international instruments currently receives and processes over 100 reports from States Parties annually, amounting to some 4,500 pages. In addition, it produces some 1,200 pages of documentation in connection with meetings of the five treaty bodies. About half of that documentation consists of annual reports of the various treaty bodies and studies drafted by the Section. The Section also produces some 1,800 pages of other written material annually.

49. The number of States Parties to the Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights rose from 23 in 1980 to 49 at the beginning of 1990. Over 140 of the cases submitted were pending consideration at the beginning of 1990, compared with 29 at the end of 1980. Ten years ago fewer than 30,000 communications were processed through the 1503 procedure; in 1989 more than 300,000 were received for processing.

50. The documentation work-load pertaining to the 1503 procedure and the Optional Protocol grew from 264 documents, totalling 1954 pages, in 1981 to 449 documents, totalling 4,377 pages, at the end of 1989. This represents a net increase of 70 per cent over the nine-year period.

51. In 1988-1989 the Special Procedures Section dealt with eight situations involving specific countries or territories and five thematic mechanisms. Twenty-two field missions were carried out, and 39 reports (containing some 2,500 pages) were submitted to the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and the Commission on Human Rights. Twenty-four other reports were submitted to those organs on eight related questions. These figures do not include transcripts of testimonies, press summaries, summaries of allegations and complaints received or analytical and other working papers placed before the relevant committees, groups and special rapporteurs.

52. The difficult financial situation during the biennium created considerable obstacles to implementing the various procedures and mechanisms, negatively influenced their servicing by the Secretariat, and impaired the quality and precision of the reporting.

53. Since the mandates for the procedures and mechanisms are temporary, renewable on an annual or biannual basis, their servicing depends to a large degree on temporary assistance. Temporary staff, in both Professional and General Service categories, is being financed from a lump sum (the so-called "Economic and Social Council mandates") which was included in the budget for the first time in 1986 on the basis of estimates made during the preceding biennium. The lump sum was at that time designed to cover temporary assistance for nine mandates (as compared to 13 now) and, in view of the financial difficulties of the Organization, has never been adjusted to the increased needs. The result, on an annual average during the past biennium, was that one junior Professional and one secretary had to service three mandates, each of which involved preparing, participating in and following-up on a field mission, and had to draft six major reports to the General Assembly and/or the Commission on Human Rights.

54. The Centre has recently begun to computerize its activities. The process has been facilitated by a generous donation of computer equipment from the Government of France. The Centre will, however, require additional resources and software to meet its full needs. A recent study (E/CN.4/1990/39) found that the need to develop appropriate information technology, through the use of computers, to assist the treaty bodies in the performance of their functions was beyond doubt, particularly in view of the considerable growth in size and complexity of the treaty régime over the past decade.

55. Table 1 compares the work-load of the Centre in terms of documentation from 1985 to 1989.

Table 1. Documentation processed by the Centre for Human Rights

(Number of pages)

	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989
Translated/revised (standard pages)	38 649	28 853	36 369	41 203	54 510
Revised only (standard pages)	6 848	4 520	6 142	8 190	9 797
Total	45 497	33 373	42 511	49 393	64 307

Note: Increase, 1985-1989 = 41.3 per cent.

56. The number of meetings serviced over the past five years increased by 60 per cent, as shown below:

1985	405
1986	220
1987	468
1988	555
1989	648

57. The number of official travel authorizations issued for the same period in connection with meetings of human rights organs, treaty bodies, working groups, special rapporteurs etc., was as follows:

1985	498
1986	342
1987	525
1988	782
1989	789

The increase from 1985 to 1989 was 58.4 per cent.

58. There has been considerable interest in the human rights programme of the United Nations, particularly in the work of the Commission on Human Rights, since 1980. In that year, 43 members of the Commission, 38 observer States and 63 non-governmental organizations attended the session. At the forty-sixth session in 1990, 76 observer States and 116 non-governmental organizations attended. Whereas no high-level governmental or ministerial representatives addressed the Commission in 1980, in 1990 one head of State, one vice-president, seven ministers of foreign affairs and three other high government officials of ministerial rank, representing all regions of the world, addressed it.

III. CONCLUSIONS

59. This report describes in detail how the Centre's work-load has increased in recent years and documents how resources have failed to keep pace with the increase in responsibilities. The proposed programme budget for the biennium 1992-1993 will contain proposals for the long-term solution of the problems posed by this situation. In the interim, solutions will be adopted to the extent possible within the framework of the approved budget for the biennium 1990-1991.

Notes

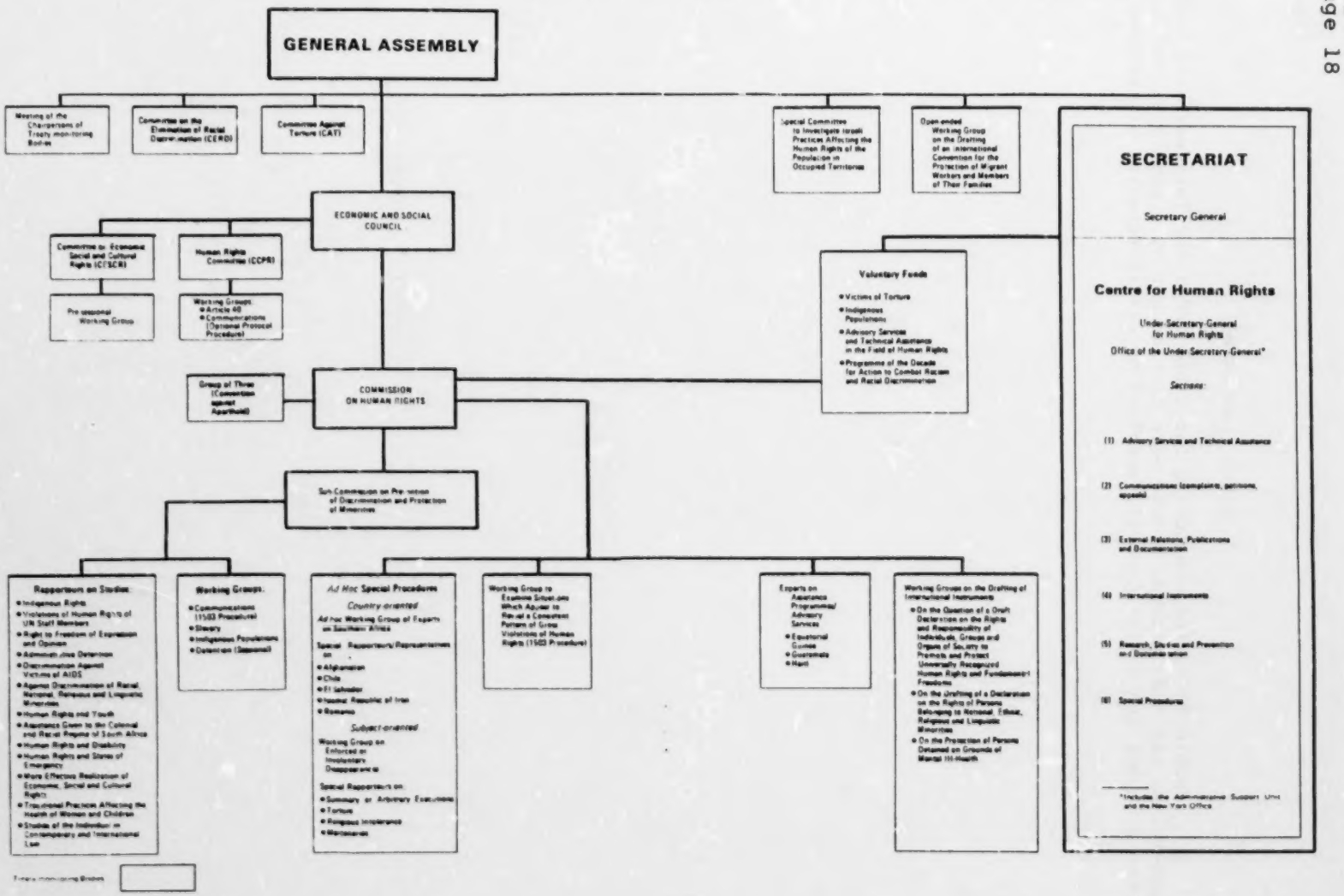
1/ The Centre for Human Rights is the focal point for the human rights activities of the Organization and is the organizational unit within the Secretariat with primary responsibility for the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms, as envisaged in the Charter of the United Nations, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, various international covenants and conventions on human rights concluded under United Nations auspices, and various resolutions of the General Assembly. It also has responsibility for standard-setting and the implementation of human rights instruments and for programmes established by the various policy-making organs and their subsidiaries, for assistance in the carrying out of fact-finding exercises and other special procedures dealing with alleged human rights violations, for technical assistance and information/education activities world wide and for functions relating to programme support.

Notes (continued)

2/ Before 1987, the monitoring functions under the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights were carried out by a sessional working group of the Economic and Social Council, serviced by the secretariat of the Council.

Annex

Servicing by the United Nations Centre for Human Rights


GENERAL ASSEMBLY
Meeting of the Chairpersons of Treaty monitoring Bodies
Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD)
Committee Against Torture (CAT)
Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Population in Occupied Territories
Open-ended Working Group on the Drafting of an International Convention for the Protection of Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families
ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL
Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR)
Human Rights Committee (CCPR)
Pre-sessional Working Group
Working Groups:
• Article 40
• Communications (Optional Protocol Procedure)
Group of Three (Convention against Apartheid)
COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS
Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities
Voluntary Funds
• Victims of Torture
• Indigenous Populations
• Advisory Services and Technical Assistance in the Field of Human Rights
• Programme of the Decade for Action to Combat Racism and Racial Discrimination
SECRETARIAT
Secretary General
Centre for Human Rights
Under-Secretary-General for Human Rights
Office of the Under-Secretary-General*
Sections:
(1) Advisory Services and Technical Assistance
(2) Communications (complaints, petitions, appeals)
(3) External Relations, Publications and Documentation
(4) International Instruments
(5) Research, Studies and Prevention and Documentation
(6) Special Procedures
*Includes the Administrative Support Unit and the New York Office
Rapporteurs on Studies:
• Indigenous Rights
• Violations of Human Rights of UN Staff Members
• Right to Freedom of Expression and Opinion
• Administrative Detention
• Discrimination Against Victims of AIDS
• Against Discrimination of Racial, National, Religious and Linguistic Minorities
• Human Rights and Youth
• Assistance Given to the Colonial and Racist Regime of South Africa
• Human Rights and Disability
• Human Rights and States of Emergency
• More Effective Realization of Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
• Traditional Practices Affecting the Health of Women and Children
• Studies of the Individual in Contemporary and International Law
Working Groups:
• Communications (1503 Procedure)
• Slavery
• Indigenous Populations
• Detention (Opinions)
Ad Hoc Special Procedures
Country-oriented
Ad hoc Working Group of Experts on Southern Africa
Special Rapporteurs/Representatives on:
• Afghanistan
• Chile
• El Salvador
• Islamic Republic of Iran
• Romania
Subject-oriented
Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances
Special Rapporteurs on:
• Summary or Arbitrary Executions
• Torture
• Religious Intolerance
• Mercenaries
Working Group to Examine Situations Which Appear to Reveal a Consistent Pattern of Gross Violations of Human Rights (1503 Procedure)
Experts on Assistance Programmes/Advisory Services:
• Equatorial Guinea
• Guatemala
• Haiti
Working Groups on the Drafting of International Instruments:
• On the Question of a Draft Declaration on the Rights and Responsibility of Individuals, Groups and Organs of Society to Promote and Protect Universally Recognized Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms
• On the Drafting of a Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National, Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities
• On the Protection of Persons Detained on Grounds of Mental Ill-Health